

VZCZCXR08824

RR RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK

DE RUEHBC #0094/01 2860959

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

R 130959Z OCT 07

FM REO BASRAH

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0613

RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0196

RUEPGAB/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ

INFO RUCNRAO/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0647

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000094

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAID ECON PGOV PREL I2

SUBJECT: PRT/USACE WORKSHOP GETS PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AND GOVERNATE WORKING TOGETHER

BASRAH 00000094 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (U) Summary: In an August 31 - September 5 conference at the Dubai School of Government, the Basrah PRT and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers introduced best practices by successful UAE and Jordanian municipal services providers to Basrah municipal service directorate (sewage, water and electricity) managers, provincial council members (PC) and Basrah University professors. Participants noted that they had never been able to debate municipal management together. Participants worked with various project management models, including that taught by U.S. Military Academy professors, capping a summer-long USMA training visit to Basrah. A field trip to Abu Dhabi municipal service plants showed best practices in action. Lively debates showed that many basic governance issues concerned with budgeting and project control still need to be sorted out between central and provincial governments and between the provincial governate and the PC. Nevertheless the workshop took participants down the crucial road from passively accepting coalition-funded infrastructure projects to budgeting and maintaining these projects for the long term. End Summary.

¶2. (U) From August 31 through September 5, the Basrah Provincial Reconstruction Team, the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Gulf Region Division South (GRS), conducted an infrastructure workshop as part of the PRT's Basrah Public Works Initiative (BPWI). The event was held at the Dubai School of Government (DSG, affiliated with the JFK School of Government), with experts also discussing best practices from the U.S., Jordan and other members of the United Arab Emirates. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded the workshop. Attendees included professors in Engineering and Management from the University of Basrah, members of the Basrah Provincial Council (PC) and directors or deputy directors from the various provincial municipal service (state-owned) companies: water, sewage and electricity. The workshop in management followed a series of workshops and assessments previously done by ACE and the Basrah PRT, and tying in with their infrastructure reconstruction projects.

¶3. (U) The BPWI is a multi-faceted approach to developing sustainable capacity for municipal infrastructure services beyond construction or renovation of water, sewage and electricity projects. BPWI uses an assessment/gap analysis model and a key is capacity building for Basra University as well as the infrastructure sectors. GRS and the Basrah PRT developed BPWI using a GRS capacity development model. USAID assisted with implementation. GRS connections with USMA led to Academy engineering and project management experts, who as professors were able to go TDY to Basrah for the entire summer, to enhance BPWI for several months. For this conference the USMA professors recapped more detailed training from past training conferences, explaining the USMA strategic planning process. PRT members trained participants in a number of management models, including that of the European Foundation for

Quality Management.

¶4. (SBU) Small group reactions to the PRT's model for infrastructure planning and decision-making revealed a lively debate. The Basrawis from academia, the PC and service directorates commented that the workshop was valuable as, in Basrah, they were unable to be seen in the same room together, let alone have a vocal debate on how to budget and operate public utilities -- due to threat of violence by militias. The section on Governance produced a robust discussion on the roles and responsibilities of the Governor's Office, the PC and the Technical directorates especially in relation to prioritization of projects and spending decisions.

¶5. (U) Workshop debate also indicated that disagreements exist between PC and governate representatives over who should have control or veto power over projects, management and budgeting. Further disagreement erupted over modeling that showed how the central government would have a role in budgeting for provincial municipal services. It was noted by some Basrawis that Dubai's success in managing municipal services had something to do with its non-democratic governance.

¶6. (U) Some of Dubai's success was shown to come from some basic management practices lacking, but with potential in Basrah. Billing residents for services promotes conservation. Producing job descriptions and employee incentives (lacking in Basrah's provincial government offices) motivates a quality workforce. Basrah suffers the high unemployment and lack of middle-aged technical people that occurs elsewhere in the country. It was noted that young university graduates in engineering are frequently lacking in English skills, important for receiving international training and working with English-language management systems.

¶6. (U) The USMA academic connection with Dubai School of Government was useful for bringing in academics in engineering and related fields at the University of Basrah. The fusion of academic thinking from the U.S. and Dubai on good governance, engineering and project management proved beneficial. Best practices workshops on the Dubai, United Arab Emirates and Jordan experiences were also beneficial. The DSG administrators

BASRAH 00000094 002.2 OF 002

were committed to determining how they could support Basra University, and agreed to provide scholarships for Basra University faculty to spend a semester teaching and studying at DSG; assistance in developing curricula for Executive Education programs; and information sharing.

¶7. (U) A field trip provided a hands-on look at successful municipal services. Participants were divided into two groups so that technical participants could get technical training while "political" participants were exposed to a strategic view of a public utility operation in Abu Dhabi. The technical participants did exercises in project management, learned how to use Microsoft Project software using a complex building construction problem, and learned about alternative power generation. The political group visited Abu Dhabi Sewerage Services Company (ADSSC) and Marfraq Waste Water Treatment Works; they learned about increasing efficiency, including HR issues surrounding redundancy of 500 staff; developing relationships with contractors and proposed privatization.

¶8. (U) Several coordinating committees grew out of this workshop. Participants agreed to the Governor's office suggestion for a coordinating group comprising governor's office, technical directorates, the PC, and where appropriate, other specialists (from industry, donors or academia) to improve communication in planning and prioritizing projects.

Participants also agreed to establish two other committees: Establishing excellence in Basrah - this group will determine how to introduce the concepts of public sector management excellence and will include Basrah University; and Finalizing the Provincial Management Cycle - a group to incorporate the management models introduced in this workshop. GRS' connection with the Basrah University was a key to bring them on board; now GRS and the PRT are trying to get Basrah University BU to take the lead in training the municipal directorate staff with assistance from the DSG.

¶9. (SBU) Comment: This workshop helped to remedy a frequent criticism of public works projects in Iraq: after a project is

built, there is frequently little attention to maintaining the facilities or services to the public. Sending more university-educated Basrawis to English training courses would be a benefit for the work force. There are clearly basic governance issues still to be worked between the legislative and executive branches of municipal government, but this workshop got the main players on the right road. Clearly some of the barriers between the Governor's Office and the PC (which months ago held a vote to dismiss the Governor) were broken down, further aided by a participant soccer game at the end. The PRT will be working with all of the actors to institutionalize management concepts learned at the workshop. End Comment.

¶10. (U) For workshop materials, attendee list or further information, contact Andrew Doust (aad@enterplan.co.uk) of the Basrah PRT (based in Dubai), FSO Clifford Sorensen (deputyprtbasra@hotmail.com) of the Basrah PRT or LTC Kenneth McDonald (Kenneth.Mcdonald@tac01.usace.army.mil) of the USACE Base in Basra. This cable was cleared with Basra PRT and USACE GRS Basra office.

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